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S E C R E T MANAMA 001267

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STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, IO

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [BA](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: BAHRAIN: ISOLATING SYRIA AT THE UNGA

REF: STATE 159137

Classified by DCM Susan L. Ziadeh for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (S) Pol/Econ chief August 31 delivered reftel demarche concerning isolating Syria at the UNGA to MFA Director for Bilateral Relations Dhafer Al Umran and (separately) to MFA Director for International Organization Affairs Ghassan Shaikho. Al Umran listened carefully to the points and stated that Bahrain could not deny a Syrian request for a bilateral meeting at the UNGA. The prime ministers of the two countries chair a joint committee - "not because we love each other," but because the two countries have shared trade and commercial interests. Al Umran said that if Bahrain meets with Syria at the UNGA, it will bring "these important points onto the table" and strongly urge Syria to take action. Bahrain is not seeking a meeting with Syria at the UNGA.

2. (S) Shaikho pledged to pass the information to the Foreign Minister. He was unaware of a Syrian request to meet with Bahrain at the UNGA, but there would be nothing to bar such a meeting: both were Arab, Muslim countries with dealings on many levels. Refusing a meeting request could be viewed as a "hostile" act. Shaikho stressed that Bahrain was a close friend and ally of the United States, but as a small country, there were limits on what actions it could take with its neighbors.

3. (S) If the two sides met, Shaikho said that Bahrain could raise the points on Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestinians, with some reservations. On Iraq, Bahrain could focus on the need for Syria to control its border and emphasize that a flare-up of terror in Iraq could spread to other countries in the region, including Bahrain. On Lebanon, Bahrain has not accused Syria of involvement in the Hariri assassination but has expressed its great shock and dismay at the unacceptable nature of the crime. Bahrain supports the Mehliis investigation and will carefully follow UN Security Council reactions. Expelling the Palestinian rejectionists is a "thorny issue" for Bahrain, but perhaps the GOB could deliver a message to Syria citing USG concerns.

4. (S) Shaikho said that Bahrain would have difficulty delivering the final point, on Syria's human rights record. Bahrain opposed other countries interfering in its domestic affairs, and only became involved in particularly flagrant cases of human rights violations, like in Burma. When Bahrain was a member of the UN Human Rights Commission, it generally avoided singling out countries for investigations, preferring to support technical assistance to help governments improve conditions.

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